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## Networking for Freelancers

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"It takes money to make money", or so the saying goes. In the case of freelancing, this is not always the case. In addition to a solid marketing plan, freelancers should take into account the power of networking.

The fact is, a freelancer's most effective means of gaining new business is word of mouth & referrals. The following tips will help you maximize your exposure, while increasing your chances of gaining new clients.

=> "What do you do?" This question is asked time & time again whenever there is any gathering of people. Use it as an opportunity to explain to folks exactly what you do. People are generally fascinated with the concept of freelancing, particularly if you are in a new & emerging freelance field.

When you articulate your job in an effective manner, there is apt to be more questions and eventually, an opportunity for you. Keep in mind that your objective here is not to hard sell anyone - that will come later, after you have had an opportunity to evaluate your potential client's needs. Also remember to have your business cards handy to hand out to these folks. Just about everyone you speak to will no SOMEONE who could use your services.

=> Use the Internet. As technology advances, the physical world grows smaller and smaller. Use that to your advantage by leveraging the power of the Internet in your favor.

There are numerous networking opportunities on the 'Net that will help you get the word out about what you do. Check out the following websites for more information:

<http://www.ryze.org> - Ryze.org Networking Community  
<http://www.robfrankel.com> - Business List by Rob Frankel

Don't discount free email lists, either. Yahoo! Groups is one of the fastest growing email list communities on the 'Net today, with a wealth of National, regional & local networking opportunities for freelancers. Simply go to <http://groups.yahoo.com> and look up keywords such as "freelance" and "business networking". I guarantee you will find more opportunities there than just about anywhere else on the 'Net.

=> Make time for networking activities. Everyday, I set aside at least 20% of my workday to conduct networking activities. This gives me enough time to send emails, make phone calls or attend functions, without cutting into my billable work hours.

=> Get out! As freelancer's, we tend to spend too much time cooped up in our offices, staring at the screen of a computer monitor. This can quickly lead to burn out and other symptoms. Take the time to get out and attend various functions in your own community. There are generally a number of daily events held by different organizations promoting business in your area. Check your local newspaper's events column to find them.

Though networking will never take the place of a good marketing plan, it should be used to its fullest by every working freelancer today.

#### **About the Author:**

David Ware is a successful freelance writer and "Virtual Assistant". He specializes in helping fellow freelancers realize their goals & potential in their business & personal life. His articles have appeared in National, regional and local publications across the U.S.

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